The Effect of Motivation on Second Language Acquisition: A Presentation of Studies

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Introduction

Our world has changed. It has become more global and less regional tearing down of geographic boundaries. People are crossing borders more often and our cultures are becoming more entwined with each other. Migration and immigration into certain nations has grown exponentially, more marriages between persons of different languages are occurring. The importance of being bilingual or multilingual in business is well-know but it may soon be essential for all people to be proficient in at least one other language just for communicating with others.

These changes in society have led to a renewed interest in language acquisition and the factors involved in developing proficiency in another language.

We know that initial language acquisition is a function of neurological development in the infant and toddler (McCain, 2002). A child develops language simply by listening to those around her. We also know that children acquire language more easily than adults because they are not as self-conscious and because having linguistic abilities gets them what they want, such as a drink or food or getting their parent' s attention. Clyne cites Eric Lenneberg and Derek Bickerton who assert "there is a biological

timetable for optimal language learning" (Clyne). When one is past that timeline, learning a language becomes far more difficult (Clyne). Judith Strozer, a theoretician, says that the difference in "brain plasticity" is the reason learning a second language after childhood is more difficult (Clyne).

Not everyone agrees with the limitations of age theory. Professor Catherine Snow, for one, argued: "The evidence clearly demonstrates that there is no critical period for second-language learning, that there is no biologically determined constraint on language learning capacity that emerges at a particular age, nor any maturational process which requires that older language learners function differently than younger language learners" (Bucuvalas, 2002). Snow did comment that there are differences between younger and older learners, however, and these differences are the same for the older learner whether learning to play a musical instrument or learning a second language (Bucuvalas, 2002). Older learners, in fact, have any number of advantages over the young learner, such as cognitive development and the ability to reason and problem solve (Snow, 2002). Older learners are also capable of devising mnemonic devises and the proficiency with the native language means they already have literacy skills (Bucuvalas, 2002). One of the disadvantages is the embarrassment an older learner feels for making mistakes (Bucuvalas, 2002).

While initial language acquisition is a matter of neurological development, hearing language and experiencing the effects of using language in children, acquiring a second language is quite different (McCain, 2002). McCain states: "Past the age of two, brain structure and differences play only a nominal role. More relevant to second

language acquisition (SLA) are four other factors: motivation, opportunity, environment, and personality" .

There is another dramatic difference in acquiring first and second language proficiency and that has to do with frequency (Tucker, 2003). In most cases, a child is surrounded by speech in only one language, the child is basically immersed in that language and must learn it to communicate. Tucker comments on the "connectionist model that implies that the language learning process depends on the input frequency and regularity" (Tucker, 2003). The quantity of exposure to the native language is significantly greater than the typical exposure to learning a second language. Everyone around the child is speaking the same language all the time. Second language learning, by contrast, offers intermittent exposure to the target language, sometimes only in the classroom. Even if the foreign language student were in a classroom all day, the amount of personal attention would still be vastly different than the child learning her native language at home.

The quality of the learning environment is also vastly different. The child gets a lot of attention and help while the second language learner receives sporadic personal attention, a fact that can certainly limit the learner' s motivation. A child' s motivation is clear and simple, he needs to communicate, it is a necessity(Tucker, 2003). Motivation for learning a second language is not nearly so simple, in most cases, it is not a necessity or it is not perceived as a real necessity (Tucker, 2003).

One of the most frequently cited theories of second language acquisition was developed and offered by Stephen Krashen, which is comprised of five main hypotheses:

- Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. "Language acquisition occurs subconsciously while participating in natural conversations or communications where the focus is on meaning" (Nolan, 2001). One learns language naturally but rules, vocabulary, grammar and such are taught. This is related to first language development (Nolan, 2001).
- Natural Order Hypothesis. Krashen does not believe that the natural order patterns of second language follows the same path as the patterns of first language acquisition. (Nolan, 2001).
- Monitor Hypothesis. This hypothesis proposed there is a monitor that helps a learner filter language. The monitor is used to apply various rules to knowledge the learner already possesses, such as which part of speech to use. Krashen says there are three factors that must be met to use the monitor effectively: time, focus on form and knowledge of rules (Nolan, 2001). Different people use the Monitor differently, some depending on it a great deal and others, not. Krashen says some people are over-users of the Monitor while others have not even learned how to use it at all (Nolan, 2001).
- Input Hypothesis. This one has to do with the distance between potential language development and actual language development. The learner needs help from others to gain proficiency (Nolan, 2001).
- Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen defined affect as "the effect of personality motivation and other affective variables on second language acquisition (Nolan, 2001). Three variables are discussed by Krashen, anxiety, motivation and self-confidence (Nolan, 2001).

  The Affective Filter Hypothesis will be discussed at greater length later, but Krashen's theory is so often cited, it is worth simply

reviewing the hypotheses.

Motivational Factors

McCain asserts that the degree of proficiency in a second language and the speed at which that proficiency is gained is related to the motivation for learning a second language as well as the perception the learner has about the community who speaks that language. Snow also comments that research has shown that motivation is directly related to adults learning a second language (Bucuvalas, 2002). In fact, Snow asserted, that regardless of age, high motivation to learn the second language has been linked to gaining proficiency in a second language (Bucuvalas, 2002). Another factor involved with gaining proficiency is having limited access to first language situations, in other words, the second language learner is in a sink-or-swim situation, they must speak the second language or not participate in the social milieu (Bucuvalas, 2002). This type of situation increases the motivation to acquire proficiency in the other language.

Gardner proposed that motivation is perceived as a continuum that is "integrative at one end and instrumental at the other" (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001; Tucker, 2003). Integrative motivation has to do with one' s desire to become a part of the other community, is interested in learning more about the community or wants to have more contact with the members of that community (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001; Fettes). Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is related to gaining a reward of some sort for learning the second language (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001). Examples of rewards might be a specific job that requires proficiency in that language or earning a diploma that requires a second language

(McCain, 2002).

In terms of learning a second language, integrative motivation is the stronger of the two because the learner wants more interaction with the community members who speak the language (McCain, 2002). If a person were to move to a neighborhood where a different language were spoken, they would be very motivated to learn the language because it would allow them to communicate and interact with their neighbors. This is an example of integrative motivation, learning the language is a social necessity (Holt, 2001).

Those learning another language with instrumental motivation will not be as likely to deliberately seek out places and situations where he or she can listen and better learn the language (McCain, 2002). If one is driven by instrumental motivation but has a low view of the community will not see any benefit in learning beyond the goal, e.g., for a job (McCain, 2002). And, if the community speaking that language is one that has high poverty levels or high crime rates, there is little motivation to relate to that community (McCain, 2002).

Integrative motivation has been consistently linked with gaining greater proficiency in second languages: “it is integrative motivation which has been found to sustain long-term success when learning a second language” (Holt, 2001). This does not mean that instrumental, the more utilitarian motivation, is not beneficial. Certain settings have been identified where instrumental motivation has been very effective (Holt, 2001). For example, certain studies in India where English is the adopted international language, “it is not uncommon for second language learners to be successful with instrumental purposes being the underlying reason

for study" (Holt, 2001).

It should also be pointed out that these two types of motivation are not mutually exclusive (Holt, 2001). Most often, there is a combination of motivational factors when an individual decides to learn a second language (Holt, 2001). Consider international students in the United States who must know English in order to participate in higher education programs but who also want to become assimilated into the culture (Holt, 2001). The same could be said of any nation where there are large numbers of international students, such as the United Kingdom.

Gardner' s socio-educational model combines four elements in learning second language: "the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting or context in which learning takes place and linguistic outcome" (Holt, 2001). It is the interrelationship of these four variables that have a direct impact on achieving second language proficiency (Holt, 2001). Each of the four elements affects the degree of motivation the learner has to learn the target language.

Gardner proposes that motivation is comprised of desire, effort and affect (Holt, 2001). Desire is self-explanatory, it is the degree to which the learner really wants to gain proficiency in another language; effort has to do with the amount of time and practice the learner devoted to gaining proficiency; and affect has to do with emotional reactions to studying the language (Holt, 2001).

Stephen Krashen also believes there are affective factors involved in learning a second language (Clyne). Krashen offered the "construct of an affective filter," comprised of "anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence" (Clyne). Krashen suggests that when a person has a great deal of self-

confidence or they are highly motivated and they also experience little anxiety, that person has a “low affective filter” (Nolan, 2001). In fact, a high level of self-confidence is directly related to high levels of motivation. These psychological variables, low anxiety, high motivation and confidence will more often result in greater learning (Nolan, 2001). By contrast, if an individual experiences high anxiety combined with less self-confidence or low self-esteem, the person is viewed as having a high affective filter and will have more difficulty learning the second language (Nolan, 2001). This combination of variables “does not provide the learner with as many “subconscious language acquisition opportunities as that of a person with a low affective filter” (Nolan, 2001). A low affective filter also decreases the degree of motivation the individual has for learning the target language.

These are psychological variables that have a significant impact on a person learning a second language and they play “a critical mediating role between the linguistic input available in the educational setting and the student’ s ability to learn” (Clyne). The conclusion is that if individuals are going to acquire proficiency in a second language, they need to be “relaxed, motivated and self-confident” during the learning process (Clyne).

Seldom are students of a second language relaxed and self-confident. They may be motivated but the other two conditions are hard to come by, especially for adults, and high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-confidence will lead to the motivation to learn the target language declining.

Alexander Guiora offers an interesting premise – when learning a second language, students must “to a certain extent, take on a new identity” (Clyne). This makes sense when we think about it. Our identity

is centered at least partly on our cultural norms and language is the core ingredient. It is through common language that we develop a community of friends. Clyne discusses the fact that "identity is developed within the context of communication and interaction" (Clyne). Language is the means for communication and thus, "language becomes central the sense of self" (Clyne). If we change our language, then, we change the self and changing oneself creates inner conflict and discomfort. Self-confidence that may be strong in most other aspects of life suddenly plummets. Again, as one' s self-confidence diminishes, so does motivation.

People feel comfortable and confident when communicating in their native language but when they struggle to learn another language, their self-esteem may suffer because they no longer have competence in communicating. Clyne put it this way, when trying "to communicate in a second language requires tremendous ego strength, an ability to retain a sense of self-esteem even when exposing and exploring an area of real weakness" (Clyne).

Noels and colleagues investigated motivation and self-determination theory in a bilingual college (2003). The University of Ottawa requires all students to demonstrate proficiency in a second language, either French or English with the primary language being the other one (Noels et al, 2003). The study also investigated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in second language learning (Noels et al, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation is defined as motivation to do the task just for the sake of doing the task (On Course). The individual may enjoy the task of learning a second language or they may just love learning anything (On Course). One definition given is: "Intrinsic motivation is choosing to do

an activity for no compelling reason, beyond the satisfaction derived from the activity itself – it' s what motivates us to do something when we don't have to do anything" (On Course). The task or activity is not completed because of any type of reward from outside sources (On Course).

Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, is dependent on external sources for rewards, reinforcement or some sort of payoff.

Research has consistently found that "Intrinsic motivation, deriving from within the person or from the activity itself, positively affects behavior, performance, and well being" (Bateman and Crant). This does not mean that external factors do not increase one' s motivation to perform a task (Bateman and Crant), like learning another language. Rewards and other types of external payoffs can be highly motivating (Bateman and Crant). There is an ongoing controversy and debate regarding intrinsic and extrinsic motivation wherein one camp says that external rewards will diminish intrinsic motivation and the other camp says this is not true (Bateman and Crant). Whatever the reality is, Bateman and Crant reported that "intrinsically motivated behavior is alleged to derive from and satisfy innate psychological needs, including needs for competence and autonomy" (Bateman and Crant). This is a premise that has been supported in the literature for many years.

When considering motivation and learning, it is important to note there is a difference between the motivation of youngsters and the motivation of adults. Dollisso and Martin (1999), for example, conducted a study to assess the motivation of adults to participate in educational programs. The investigators noted that previous research found that adults are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically (Dollisso and Martin,

1999). In other words, there are internal motivational factors as well as external factors, such as some type of reward. Numerous researchers have found that many adults will attend educational programs when there is an extrinsic reward when they would not otherwise attend that program. Extrinsic rewards could be those that increase one' s opportunities to gain a new job or a promotion with their present employer. Given the global nature of the market, many employers are looking for employees who speak more than one language.

In their own study, Dollisso and Martin concluded that the primary motivations for adults to learn are both intrinsic and extrinsic (1999). Intrinsic in that their own need for achievement is a primary factor to learn and succeed (Dollisso and Martin, 1999). Extrinsic in that the material must be useful to them right now (Dollisso and Martin, 1999). Furthermore, as past research has also concluded, the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation are inextricably linked to each other. In other words, they are both involved and cannot be separated (Dollisso and Martin, 1999). This is an important variable to remember – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation cannot always be separated and, in fact, they are more often linked together.

We can equate extrinsic motivation to the instrumental motivation discussed in second language acquisition literature and intrinsic motivation can be linked to integrated motivation.

Noels and colleagues developed an instrument to assess subtypes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and then tried to find a link between the "subtypes and various orientations to language learning that had been identified by Clement and Kruidenier (1983), including the travel,

friendship, knowledge, and instrumental orientations" (Noels et al, 2003, p. 33).

Their results showed a strong correlation between self-determination external regulation orientation and instrumental orientation and an inter-correlation between friendship, knowledge and travel orientations and identified regulation and intrinsic motivation" (Noels et al, 2003). Perceived autonomy and feelings of competence influenced second language learning (Noels et al, 2003), which supports other work that demonstrates a relationship between self-confidence and motivation in gaining proficiency in a second language. Perceived autonomy fits under the umbrella of intrinsic or integrated motivation.

Another factor in learning a second language is opportunity. Second language learners may seek out opportunities to immerse themselves in the second language or opportunities where they can use what they have learned (McCain, 2002). Motivation is related to opportunity because the more highly motivated the learner is, the more likely they will be to deliberately seek out opportunities to use what they have learned, to listen to others speaking that language so as to improve their own abilities (McCain, 2002). When involved in these situations, the learner can increase their vocabulary, learn conversational language and improve their own performance (McCain, 2002).

On the other hand, an individual may be highly motivated to learn the language but there are no opportunities to use what has been learned outside the instructional setting (Fettes).

Hashimoto conducted a study to determine if motivation and willingness to communicate could be used as predictors of the second

language learner actually using that second language. The target subjects were Japanese ESL students in classrooms. Hashimoto used the Gardner and Lambert approach to motivation because it is the most common motivation approach used in second language acquisition studies (Hashimoto, 2002). This is a socio-educational model in which the authors made the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation (Hashimoto, 2002). According to Gardner and Lambert, "integrative motivation is positive attitudes toward the target language group and a willingness to integrate into the target language community, whereas instrumental motivation refers to practical reasons for learning a language, such as to gain social recognition or to get a better job" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 29). This model considers what roles individual differences play in learning a second language (Hashimoto, 2002). Two categories of variables are suggested as contributing to the second language learner' s motivation to learn: integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation (Hashimoto, 2002).

Gardner also developed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to assess the different variables in his socio-educational model (Hashimoto, 2002). The battery is comprised of 11 different subtests and over 100 separate items (Hashimoto, 2002). Three of the categories are "integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, and motivation" (Hashimoto, 2002). Another category is instrumental orientation or instrumental motivation, which is described as having pragmatic reasons for learning the language (Hashimoto, 2002). Another is language anxiety, such as the level of anxiety felt when the person is called upon to speak in the second language (Hashimoto, 2002).

While Gardner' s model is the most commonly-used model in studying motivation in learning another language, there were a number of criticisms, which Gardner subsequently addressed (Hashimoto, 2002). Specifically, others charged that there was too much emphasis attached to integrative and instrumental motivation with little or no attention paid to other aspects of motivation (Hashimoto, 2002). Gardner subsequently wrote that attitudes towards the teacher could affect motivational levels, for instance (Hashimoto, 2002). Other factors that could impact learning a language include "language learning strategies, language anxiety, and self-confidence with the language" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 29).

Schumann asserted that "although instrumental and integrative motivations are useful ways to think about success in second language learning, motivations are complex constructs that interact with social and other variables" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 29). Schumann promotes an acculturation model that the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group predicts how well or how easily they will learn the language (Hashimoto, 2002). Motivation is just one of numerous variables that affects acculturation (Hashimoto, 2002).

Hashimoto reports there have been a number of studies about second language motivation and social context and social identity (Hashimoto, 2002). Pierce, for example, introduced the notion of investment building and argued that focusing on instrumental and integrative motivation "does capture the complex relationship among power, identity, and language learning" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 29). Pierce also argued that artificial distinctions are often made between the social world and the individual learner but "motivation must be understood with reference to

social context and in relation to the multiple changing and contradictory identities of language learners across time and space" (Hashimoto, 2002, p. 29).

Personality is also related to both motivation and opportunity. For example, an introverted personality may be motivated to learn the language but they will not deliberately seek out opportunities to practice the language in real life (McCain, 2002). McCain reported that "introversion has the greatest chance of negatively affecting SLA" (2002). If the person is afraid to make mistakes or afraid of embarrassing themselves by not speaking the language correctly, they may actually avoid any opportunity to practice the language. Personality is one factor that second language instructors must be aware of because the wrong kind of correction may severely decrease the learner' s motivation level (McCain, 2002). An extroverted or adventuresome personality, by contrast, will be less afraid and, if motivated to learn the language will take every opportunity to use it and learn more about it.

Conclusions

Motivation plays an essential role in second language acquisition. While there are different theories as to the type of motivation that is more influential, I feel that motivation is extremely complex and cannot really be separated from the other factors involved in learning a second language. An initial high level of motivation is not enough for second language learning. There are far too many other variables involved.

Krashen offered a hypothesis called the affective filter, which is comprised of "anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence" (Nolan, 2001).

Krashen went on to discuss high and low affective filters (Nolan, 2001). A person with a low affective filter is one who has a high degree of self-confidence, is highly motivated and has a low level of anxiety (Nolan, 2001). A person with a high affective filter has high anxiety and less self-confidence or a lower self-esteem (Nolan, 2001). Individuals with low affective filters will gain proficiency more easily than those with high affective filters (Nolan, 2001). Both anxiety and self-confidence have a direct effect on motivation.

Most of the research addresses two types of motivation – instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation is utilitarian, i.e., learning the language will result in some sort of reward or benefit for the person, such as getting a job or earning a diploma (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001). The individual wants to learn the language because of the utility of it rather than for other purposes (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001). Integrative motivation has to do with the desire to learn the language due to an interest in the community and culture or the desire to become a member of the community who speaks that language (McCain, 2002; Holt, 2001). A person who marries someone who speaks another language is a good example of integrative motivation. The individual wants to be a member of their spouse' s community.

Integrative and instrumental motivation are necessarily exclusive of each other. The learner may be operating under both types of motivation. There is most certainly a link between intrinsic motivation and integrative motivation and between extrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation in terms of learning a second language.

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